Safety of Indian students in Russia

1693. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a youth terrorist group in Russia is targeting non-white foreigners, particularly students, studying in Russia which has spread a panic amongst Indian students in Russia; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken to ensure safety of Indians, particularly students in Russia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) While there are no well identified organized youth terrorist groups in Russia, there are criminal elements including 'skinheads' targeting from time to time non-white foreigners, including students. Many foreign nationals, including Indians, have been the victims. This has caused some anxiety in the Indian community. However, there seems to have been a certain level of decline in this trend in recent months.

(b) Our Embassy in Moscow monitors the local law and order situation and periodically advises the Indian community, including students, on necessary safety precautions. Our concerns are also taken up with the concerned Russian authorities as and when required.

Hostage truck drivers in Iraq

1694. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have seriously taken the issue of the three truck drivers held hostage in Iraq recently;

(b) whether Government have any report of the Indian working in Iraq in different fields; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government have received reports of Indians working

in Iraq in civilian and non-combatant jobs, such as helps in kitchen, dining facilities, laundry, transport, maintenance etc.

Indians working in Iraq

†1695. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that over 7,000 of Indians are earning their livelihood by means of various kinds of work in Iraq;

(b) if not, the exact number thereof and the kind of work they are engaged in;

(c) whether it is also a fact that most of them are interested in returning to India; and

(d) if so, the estimated number thereof and arrangements Government have made to bring them back?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) It is estimated that about 5000 Indians are presently working in Iraq in civilian and non-combatant jobs such as helps in kitchen, dining facilities, laundry, transport and maintenance etc.

(c) and (d) A small number of Indians in Iraq who approached the Indian Mission in Baghdad expressing their desire to return to India were extended all possible assistance.

To assist Indians in Iraq who want to return to India, the Government has taken the following steps:

(1) Government has instructed the Indian Missions in Iraq and its neighbouring countries to extend all possible assistance to the Indian nationals in Iraq who want to return to India.

(2) Government has taken up with the Governments of Jordan and Kuwait for transit visas for Indians returning to India from Iraq.

(3) Indian Mission in Baghdad has contracted the employers of Indians who wish to return to India to facilitate their travel out

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.